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SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT

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The astounding growth of urban communities in the United States and throughout the civilized world that has taken place within the life of the generation just past is at last facing a hopeful reaction. The city has, humanly speaking, proven to be a failure.

Congestion of population and concentration of industrial activity have been over-capitalized and no contingent means have been provided to meet the needs for a normal human development and efficient industrial growth of our cities. These two important factors are now pointing the way toward a hopeful solution of ultra-urbanization of all human activities. The decentralization of human habitation first found expression in the splendid development of our metropolitan suburbs, and now the growing need for industrial expansion, the over-capitalization of city land values and a demand for more healthful industrial conditions are fostering an industrial exodus countryward that presents one of the most hopeful tendencies in modern society.

It is through this exodus that we hope to solve a considerable share of our housing problem, improve living conditions and create a closer coöperation and deeper sympathy between the worker and his work. Pullman, Gary and Fairfield, in this country; the many flourishing garden cities of England and Germany, the rapid growth of suburbs in the vicinity of metropolitan cities and the numerous industrial satellite cities are convincing evidence of the decentralization of human habitation and industrial activity.

An impressive statement and a clear conception of the appalling concentration of population that has taken place in our midst can be derived from a study of the statistics of population of the thirteenth census. Of the total land area of the United States, amounting to 1,903,289,600 acres, only 1,185,795.8, or 0.026 per cent of the total land area of the country, are occupied by the metropolitan cities, which contain 18.59 per cent of the total population of the country, 91,972,666 in 1910. If we consider all cities of the United

States of over 30,000 population we find that they contain 27,316,407 people, or 29.76 per cent of the population of the country, living upon an acreage of 2,335,664.6 or 0.123 per cent of the total land area of the country. In other words, while the total land area of the United States is sufficient to allow each person over 20 acres each, the people in the cities of over 30,000 are living on the average of about 12 to the acre.

While this enormous congestion has been developing a return to the open country and the smaller communities has taken place.

If we consider the communities within 15 miles of the limits of the American metropolitan cities we find constantly growing and prosperous residential and industrial communities which occupy (3,531,736.4 acres) over three times the amount of territory occupied by the metropolitan cities, the satellites of which they are, and accommodate only a little over one-quarter the number of people.

If we consider the cities of 200,000 population or more we find that the cities proper have increased at the rate of 33.2 per cent during the period that elapsed between the census of 1900 and the census of 1910. The outlying districts of the same cities have increased at the rate 43.0 per cent during the same period of time.

These are hopeful signs that should be seriously considered as one means of decentralizing our business and residential life and reducing congestion, if its complete abolition is impossible. The protection of these outlying districts against the repetition of the evils of the metropolitan cities can be secured only through proper suburban planning.

In Pennsylvania, a section of the country with which the writer is especially familiar, this development of the smaller industrial and residential communities is clearly evident from the census figures. When we compare the growth of the larger cities with that of the smaller populational units we find that while the cities of more than 100,000 population like Scranton, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, have grown at the rate of 28.9 per cent in the last ten years, the communities of from 10,000 to 25,000 have grown at the rate of 42.1 per cent and the communities of 2500 to 10,000 at the rate of 52.6 per cent in the same period of time. The rate of increase in population in the metropolitan city of Philadelphia was only 21.3 per cent or two and a half times less than the communities of less than 10,000 population. These figures are extremely significant from the point

of view of the town planner and the student of the evils of congestion, as they represent a new and far-reaching tendency in the distribution of population.

A close examination of the figures relating to the counties adjoining the county and city of Philadelphia shows that the population of the two counties in which industrial development was made possible by transportation facilities, power, etc., has increased very rapidly in the last forty years. In the case of Delaware County, where conditions for industrial development are especially favorable, the increase was 199 per cent, as against 127 per cent for Philadelphia.

In Montgomery County the increase was 107 per cent in the last forty years, a rate that represents a considerable advance over the counties which have not developed industrially and is very close to the rate of growth of the metropolitan city.

The facts just stated point the way toward the solution of one of our most serious problems, "congestion," but the hope for the solution of this momentous problem is not in the mere shifting of population, but in the far-sighted control of this growth in the direction of constructive community planning. The small communities are quick to imitate the cities in both their good and bad features and while they realize the importance of the growth of population, they are often ill prepared for or entirely ignorant of the responsibilities involved in the educational, physical and moral care of the increasing numbers of human beings.

Health conditions in the smaller cities and towns which have been affected by industrialism are generally as bad or worse than those of the larger cities. The city slum is being transferred into the open country and the barrack-like tenement often stands out in bold defiance to nature's beautiful surroundings. Industries seeking the smaller communities are permitted to locate anywhere, without regard to human or community needs. Doctor Hegemann characterized the congestion in the business and financial district of our cities as "the slumification of business centers." The suburban development of recent years may, in many instances, be justly described as "the slumification of the countryside."

The city, with its congestion, narrow and ill-kept streets, dangerous traffic distribution, lack of play facilities, poor housing provisions, high morbidity rates, has proved wasteful of human resources. The city has mistaken industrial development for prosperity and

increase of population for genuine civic advancement. The individual has been lost sight of except as he adds to the human bulk. Humanizing influences have been relegated to a weak and ill-fitting educational system that wholly neglects the element of local patriotism, which is essential in all community building.

The present age is one of tireless, extravagant and extensive building. Cities are built in a week and hamlets grow overnight. We do not depend upon the past for the beginning of our work and need not depend upon the future for its completion. We are the masters of creation of our cities and towns. If this age is forgotten or condemned for its work, it will be due to our art of building, because that is the only lasting heritage we shall leave that is all ours. Science and art and literature we may have and our share in the chains of progress is being done, but the cities are all our own and must stand the test of endurance, fitness, healthfulness and beauty or be forgotten.

As all evils must sooner or later find their remedy, so our abhorrent methods of city building are finding their remedy in the development of the town-planning idea.

Parks, playgrounds, proper homes, transportation, water supply, amusement centers, art galleries, schools, museums, etc., are essentials of civilized community life and constitute the field of town and city planning. The town and city planner must coördinate these essentials and so humanize them as to embrace the highest ideals of present community development backed by a community patriotism that will stand the test of the highest standard of social well-being.

The cost of community planning may be measured in dollars and cents, but a more accurate measurement is to be found in the rate of infant mortality and the daily deaths and the amount of ill-health and crime that we must suffer and pay for. The well-planned garden cities of England and Germany are teaching us the lesson that health, morals and industrial efficiency are possible of control by proper community planning. Statistics show us that density of population goes hand in hand with frequency of deaths, sickness and crime. On every side we find overwhelming evidence of the value of proper community planning and development and the growing desire for better living conditions among the people. The diagnosis is made, the remedy—town planning—is known and we shall pay a well deserved penalty if we do not apply it.

The suburbanizing of the wage-earner is a great social and economic opportunity. The increase in the population of our smaller cities and towns as well as the growing countryward industrial exodus that is taking place in this country hold out a golden opportunity, and it is for us to say whether this growth will result in a contamination of the open country by the city slums or whether garden communities will look upon the bleak horrors of our urbanized existence and give men, women, and children a new lease on life and industry and chance to serve men rather than to enslave them.

The large cities present a possibility for reconstruction, for palliative town planning, while the younger cities and towns have the open country before them, little to rebuild and readjust, and a great advantage over the congested city slums which they have now the opportunity to condemn to everlasting death by their superior living advantages and their advantage for shaping their future growth to meet future as well as present needs.

The Utopian city of yesterday can be realized in the growing suburbs of our own times and the future will praise us or blame us as we realize or fail to realize the practical ideals that science and art and a living democracy make possible this day.